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The Christian Ministry Entitled to Support.

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A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED

AT THE OPENING OF THE ANNUAL SESSIONS

OF

FLINT RIVER PRESBYTERY,

IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

COLUMBUS, GEORGIA,

APRIL 2d, 1851,

BY JOHN S. WILSON,

PASTOR OF THE DECATUR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

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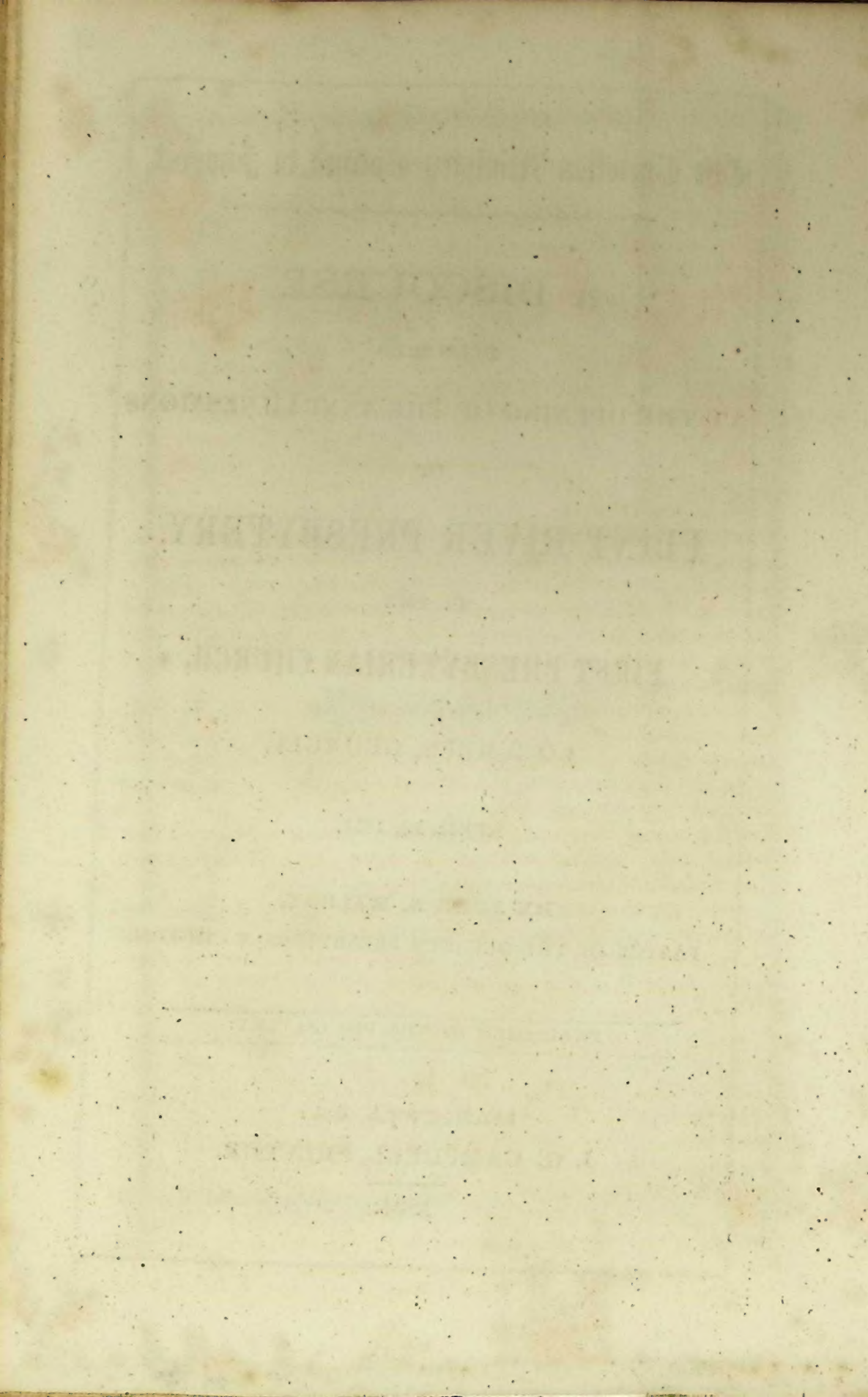
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1851.





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## A DISCOURSE.

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"Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"

"Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?"

"For it is written in the law of Moses: Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?"

"Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt this is written: That he that plougheth should plough in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"

"If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ,

"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple; and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar. Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel."

I. CORINTHIANS, IX: 7—14,

"It is one of the characteristic properties of a great mind," remarks a distinguished writer,\* "that it can contract, as well as dilate itself, and the mind which cannot do both, is not great in its full extent." The minuter shades of character do not themselves make up a valuable person—they may be possessed in perfection, separate from great excellence. That would be a feeble mind which should be composed of inferior qualities, only: so that would be an imperfect one in which they are wanting. To the strongest lines

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\* MRS. MORE.



of character, the Apostle Paul added the lighter touches, the graceful filling up which finish the portrait. While he dwells on the mysterious and sublime doctrines of the Christian system with a force and pathos never equalled by any other sacred writer, he descends to matters of comparatively small moment. The disagreement of two private members of the Church of Phillippi, calls forth an admonitory appeal, as well as the greater distraction and unchristian dissensions existing in the Church at Corinth.

It was the Apostle's motto, "Let all things be done decently and in order." Right things must be done in a right manner. The duty of obedience to the civil magistrate—the mutual condescension of man to man—the conscientious regard due from the eater of flesh to the eater of herbs—were matters worthy his attention, and calling for his admonition and instruction. The duties of the governed and the governor—the parent and the child—the master and the servant—the pastor and the people, receive from him appropriate notice. Indeed, in no portion of the Bible do we find the relative duties so faithfully and explicitly set forth as in the apostolical epistles of Paul.

That portion of God's word selected for our consideration this evening, is the most extended passage in the New Testament, instructing the Churches of Christ in their duty towards those who minister in holy things. I have chosen it as the theme of my present discourse, because I think I may here discuss it free from an apprehension that my motives may be misconstrued; and may I not in the presence of this venerable Presbytery—in the presence of these representatives of the Churches, and in the presence of this intelligent auditory, for once, venture to bring forward the teachings of God's holy word on this momentous subject—a subject truly momentous whether we consider its connection with the efficiency of the ministry, or with the prosperity of the church; with the honor of Christ or the salvation of men?

That the ministry is very inadequately sustained by our churches, none will deny, who have given even the most superficial attention to the matter. If we except a few churches in the cities and larger towns, scarcely a single church within our limits, affords an ample support to those who bring to them from Sabbath to Sabbath the bread of life.—Does any one entertain a shadow of doubt on this point?—Let the hundreds of ministers in these United States, sinking in penury and want, and day by day driven to their wit's end, to devise ways and means to procure food and raiment for their families—let the hundreds who are dragging out a



weary and discouraged existence, oppressed with the most gloomy forebodings as to the welfare of those dear to them, when they shall be no more, proclaim it in men's ears till they shall tingle—that the churches—the members of Christ's redeemed and gathered churches, are awfully defective; nay, criminally guilty in this matter. Yes, I feel fully authorized to proclaim, that the griping parsimoniousness with which a poor pittance is doled out to those who dig and toil and sweat in the vineyard, is withering the church and cursing the world.

Covetousness is yet the sin of the Christian Church. Who doubts that from this source flow all the paralyzing influences, which now retard the advancement of all the great and noble schemes of general benevolence, and the world's speedy conversion to Christ? Who doubts, that this causes so many of our churches to exhibit, if not positive symptoms of retrogression, at least ominous signs of having fulfilled their mission. They live, but not like the oak of five hundred summers, crowned with verdure, and glorying in its strength and magnificence.

This worldliness of the church which stints the ministry, and dries up the streams of benevolence is the Upas shade that spreads its baleful influence over the vineyard, till there is neither vine nor vintage. This spirit, is the waters of Marah by whose acrid stream no pleasant meadows bloom. This spirit, is the Dead Sea in whose ponderous waters no living thing moves, or has its being. To the prevalence of this spirit, we must attribute the sapless, leafless condition of many of our churches. It renders them a barren waste, so that they stand "like the heath in the desert and see not when good cometh," or they loom up in the distance, like the blackened, desolated mountains of Gilboa, where neither dew nor rain, nor fields of offering are found. A living evangelical author\* has pronounced this spirit the Protean evil, which works more insidiously and extensively in the demolition of Christ's Kingdom, than any other which can be specified in the present day. It is the Moloch or the Minotaur, which not sated alone by human blood, feasts on the souls of men. It is Dives, seated in the mansion of opulence, and flowing in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day, while Christ's cause and Christ's ambassadors are Lazarus lying at the rich man's gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fall from his table.

It would seem indeed that the church doubts whether there



is any "thus saith the Lord" in the Bible, for the support of the Ministry; because we can hardly bring ourselves to believe that candid men—men too, scrupulously honest and faithful in all the common transactions of life, would withhold that stipend due to the spiritual laborer in Christ's vineyard any more than the wages due to him who ploughs their fields and gathers in thier harvests, if convinced of the validity of the claim. May we not venture then to stir up the mind of the church, to a realization of the solemn obligations resting upon her in this respect?

The Apostle bases the obligation of the church to sustain the gospel Ministry,

*I. On the principles of natural justice.*

"Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"

The light of nature and the law of nations manifestly teach that those employed in the public service should be sustained at the public expense. The defender of the rights and liberties of his country, lawfully claims not only the sympathies of his countrymen, but rewards commensurate with the value of his services. What soldier goes to war at his own charges? What right have we to expect, that those who protect our houses and fire-sides—our wives and children from the inroads of violence and rapine, should endure the trials and dangers of the tented field, and at the same time equip and provide for themselves? How very soon would the country be without defenders—how soon would her Navy be deserted and her fortresses dismantled; nay, how speedily would ruin and desolation overspread her borders, should the protection of her dearest interests be committed to the voluntary efforts of her citizens, without organization, and without the regular supplies of the sinews of war. An efficient soldiery is formed by sufficient support. Mutiny and desertion are the result of stinted and irregular supplies.

But what is the value of the services of a country's defenders, compared to the worth of a self-denying able gospel Ministry? Passing by the dearer and higher interests of our spiritual being at present, let us contrast for a moment the temporal advantages derived from the labors of the soldier and the Ministry.

The temporal prosperity of any people is intimately connected with, and greatly augmented by a faithful Ministry. Yes, remove, if you please, these sentinels from Zion's heights, and let the defence of the truth constantly maintain-



ed by an evangelical Ministry in this land, cease. Let no warning voice be raised against the multiplied forms of error and vice. Let the doors of every sanctuary be closed, and no hallowing influence of the holy Sabbath be felt, nor note of the Sabbath bell, be heard over these hills and valleys. Let the holy fire of faith and prayer be extinguished on every altar, and the volume of divine truth be closed, and its expounders be silenced. Let the infidelity and covetousness of the churches, blow such a blast as shall recall every leader of the embattled hosts from the bulwarks of Zion—and who would dwell in this land? Would atheism—would proud and gospel-scorning infidelity, dare to dwell in “this horrible place?” Who that has ever seen the light, and tasted the sweets of social order in a gospel land, could dwell amidst the deepening shades of the approaching night of barbarism, the never failing issue of a destitution of the gospel Ministry? And of what avail would the wisest and most stringent legislation for the protection of virtue and the suppression of vice prove, without the benign influence of the sacred desk? Nay, what would your armies and navies and all the material and pomp of glorious war accomplish, without the succor and sanction of the pulpit? “I magnify mine office,” said Paul, and truly, from whatever point of observation we contemplate the Ministry of the gospel, the office is great and beneficial in its results. The sweetest Christian poet\* has said, and well said,

“The Pulpit; (in the sober use  
Of legitimate, peculiar powers,)  
Must stand acknowledged while the world shall stand,  
The most important and effectual guard,  
Support and ornament of virtue’s cause.”

The late excellent and pious Dr. John H. Rice, once said to a congregation—“No people can afford even in a pecuniary point of view, to live without the gospel. Without a faithful minister, sin will tax you more a hundred fold than the necessary expenses of religion.” What well instructed people will not see this? What man of the world in the mere exercise of prudent forethought will not see it? Who would think of speculating in the houses and lands of Sodom and Gomorrah? Who would invest his capital in business in the midst of such a community? Not the prudent far-seeing man of the world. A Lot might do it and reap the bitter fruits of his imprudence, just as many worldly professors have done since his day.



Yes, brethren, the laborer is worthy of his hire. If the planter and dresser of the vineyard is entitled according to the principles of natural justice to eat of the fruit—if the shepherd who feeds the flock, watches for its welfare, and protects it from violence, is entitled to a supply of his wants from the produce of the flock—if the soldier who wages mortal strife and repels the aggressions of his country's foes at the cannon's mouth, is entitled to that country's gratitude and bounty—if it is judged reasonable that men should receive an equivalent for their labors, whatever useful vocation they may follow, is it not more evidently the case, when the highest interests of virtue and the felicity of immortal souls is concerned? Christ's servants are sent for the defence of the truth. Thus Jehovah addresses the Prophet: "O son of man I have set thee for a watchman unto the house of Israel." And the spiritual watchman must stand firm amidst all discouragements and cheerfully encounter all opposition. Let his pathway be what it may, rough or smooth—whether a green carpeted path, decked with flowers, or a dirty, treacherous slough, he must stick at nothing, but go through thick and thin, patiently enduring afflictions and self-denial for the gospel's sake. He must fight the good fight of faith—contend earnestly for the truth—and if need be, lay down his life in defence of it. We may look on the sketch drawn by the pen of an inspired apostle and learn something of what an approved minister must endure, that he may obtain the end of his ministry. "In all things approving ourselves as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distress, in strifes, in imprisonment, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings. By pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left." And will not the very walls of many sanctuaries—the sacred desk—the very seats which they have occupied in the house of God—the communion table, around which they have gathered to eat and drink in memory of their dying, risen Lord, cry out against the injustice done to Christ's servants, by those calling themselves churches of Christ? To such we may apply the severe and cutting rephension of the Apostle James, addressed to covetous rich men.

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries which shall come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heap-



ed treasure together for the last day. Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which of you is kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." In the judgment day, not only our actions, but the circumstances of our actions shall be brought forth, and used as arguments for our conviction—the rusty iron, the cankered silver, the moth-eaten garments shall be produced—the stones of the wall built by oppression shall cry, "Lord we were built by oppression and violence," and the beam out of the timber shall answer it, "True, Lord; even so it is."—Hab. 2, 11.

*II. "The Apostle bases his second argument for the support of the Ministry upon the claims of humanity."*

"Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the Ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he that plougheth should plough in hope, and he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope."

The wise man has said, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast," and we may add, a righteous people will regard the life and comfort of their minister.

Not satisfied with resting their claims to maintainance, upon the principles of natural justice, the Apostle appeals in behalf of Ministers to the law of God, respecting the brute creation. If the laborious ox that ploughs your fields and threshes out your corn, is entitled to your sympathy and humane treatment—if it is the enactment of Heaven, that he shall be fed and cared for, in consideration of his toil—that his mouth shall not be muzzled as he performs his daily task, but shall enjoy the fruits of his labor; how much more is he who comes with good tidings of great joy—with the riches of heavenly grace, entitled to your sympathy and the supply of his temporal wants? It is according to the law of heaven, the laborer is worthy of his hire, whether man or beast. So the Lord hath ordained.

How devoid of humanity and all the kindlier qualities of our nature is the man, or the people, who care not for the pinching necessities of those who plough for them the gospel field, and provide for them the finest of the wheat?—How small a portion of the spirit and mind of that Redeemer, who came from the bosom of the Father to bring soul-enriching blessings to those ready to perish, do such possess? Too many of our churches, acting in the spirit of the cruel,



hard-hearted and avaricious master, who thrusts a muzzle on the mouth of his ox, lest he should seize a few ears of corn to satisfy the claims of natural appetite, as he trudges on threshing out his rich harvest, do equally muzzle their ministers—do deny them the fruits of their toil, that they may fill their own coffers with gain. There is a very numerous class of men in some of our churches, who greatly fear that they may become partakers of other men's sins. These conscientious brethren are found among the Elders, Deacons and private members of the church. They fear to give liberally lest they should make their ministers rich, and growing fat, like Jeshurun, they should kick. "Keep him poor to keep him humble," is a favorite apophthegm with such.—Truly, humility is an excellent grace; but is it more important to Ministers than people? I suppose that wealth is equally as dangerous to Elders and private members of the church as to Ministers. And yet, such people are generally as ready to demand of their Ministers full service, as the most liberal. They expect of them their Sabbath services, and that in the sacred desk, they shall bring forth things both new and old on every Sabbath day. They expect them to appear in the sanctuary with well beaten oil for the sacred lamp, that it may burn brightly and cheerily. They expect them to dig and delve day and night to bring forth rich spiritual fruit, and demand that they shall descend into the well of the divine word and bring up gospel truth. They expect them to minister the consolations of the gospel at the couch of the sick and the dying—that they perform funeral services, and attend their dead to their last resting place. They expect them to visit from house to house—to attend meetings for prayer—to deliver addresses—to attend the meetings of church sessions, Presbyteries and Synods, and all at their own charges. In one word, they must be the factotum of the congregation. The full tale of bricks must be given in, whether straw is supplied or not; otherwise they may soon hear the no very gentle chidings of their people, "Ye are idle, ye are idle." Thrust into a school room, amidst the thousand perplexities and vexatious cares, which ever abide in that wonderful and wonder-working place—doomed to the thankless task of training untrained minds, and guiding perverse wills along the thorny pathway of knowledge—required sometimes, to perform the superhuman work of creating intellect, where all is blank, and causing the seed to spring up where all is sterility, and after all to meet the reproaches of parents and friends, the scorn and contempt of the world. Thus five days in six they



must dwell in Babel, and combat the whirlwind of confusion and then come forth on the Sabbath, with a well ordered mind, a clear and peaceful heart, a well digested message, with elastic spirits and buoyant hopes to discharge the most responsible duties ever imposed on man. "Who is sufficient for these things?" Could an angel sustain the burden?—Yet such a burden is borne by many among us. Such drag out a miserable existence, and too often sink into a premature grave.

This stinting process of the churches exerts a blighting influence too on the talents of the Ministry. There are many minds which, had they possessed facilities for improvement and full developement, would have shone forth among the most brilliant intellects in the church, and taken their stations at the highest point, in influence and usefulness in the world.—But their aspirations have been extinguished—their genius cramped, and their light put under a bushel, by this meager and stifling treatment of the church, and in place of becoming giants, they have remained miserable pigmies. Without books, without time for mental discipline, under the necessity of daily catering to the wants of themselves and families, either in the school-room or at the handles of the plough, how can it be otherwise, than that we shall have many Ministers of limited capacities. It matters not what may have been the training or amount of mental furniture a young man may have possessed at his entrance upon the work of a Minister, if no additions are made to his stock, by diligent study, he will be little more capable of instructing his people than his church-bell, nothing but sounding brass. Ever drawing out without ever replenishing, will soon leave the largest cistern empty.

I now solemnly put this question to you who hear me, whether you do not believe there are many members in our churches who show more compassion to the animals that plough their fields, than they do to their Ministers. A perception of self-interest, impels them to make provision for the one, while a spirit of selfishness leaves the other destitute. The exposure of the spiritual laborer to adversity, nakedness and want, excites less compassion in their bosoms than the lowing of their hungry, shivering ox.

But what saith the word, "He that plougheth should plough in hope, and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope." Yes, hope is the strong lever of human action—a refreshing cordial to the soul. It inspires to noble deeds and lofty attainments. But, alas! what is the hope of the Ministry in many churches? The spider's web is not a more



miserable, unsubstantial tissue than the promises and engagements of such; and he who bases his expectations on such promises—promises and vows made under the most solemn circumstances—with hands uplifted before God, and calling the Omniscient to witness the sincerity with which they are made, builds upon the shifting sand of the desert. I do not charge churches with the direct intention of dishonesty, or with the premeditated purpose of violating their solemn vows to God and man. This must be left to the decisions of their own consciences. I state the simple, well known and too oft experienced fact, that churches do fail to comply with their obligations to their Ministers. They do it, because they can do it with impunity. They would not dare act thus, in the common and secular transactions of life, since it would subject them to legal coercion. But who thinks of collecting ministers' salaries by legal process? Not because such a measure might not be resorted to, and most righteously too in many instances, but because Ministers are unwilling, in such cases, to appeal unto Cæsar.

In this connection let me observe, that it is justly the boast and glory of our country, that our National Constitution recognizes no established religion, and interposes no authority between the church and the kingship of Christ. While it extends protection and freedom to every variety and shade of faith, it adopts and patronizes no particular creed.—Although our fathers venerated the church and its holy institutions; yet were they content to recognize her, as a kingdom not of this world, and as subject only to the administrative authority of her gloriously exalted Head, leaving the support and perpetuation of her divine mission to the voluntary offerings of her individual members. Unlike the State establishments of the Monarchies of the old world, deriving their revenues from tithes and church rates, wrung from unwilling hands by the strong arm of the law, the church of the Redeemer in this free land, looks for its sustentation to the free-will offerings of Christ's purchased people.

But to return. Ministers are enjoined to use hospitality, and not to forget to entertain strangers. It is one of the necessary qualifications of a Bishop; as indispensable as good behaviour, or aptness to teach. And yet, alas! how oft is the demand made upon their hospitality, when there is but a handful of meal in the barrel, and very little oil in the cruse, and no wonder-working Elijah present to replenish the exhausted store. We have heard some church members pray that God would bless their Minister in his basket and his store; but we felt at the time that it was



mere form—a soulless, ineffectual prayer, of no more avail than the prayer of the churl for the naked and perishing, “Be ye warmed and be ye filled:” How could they expect his basket to be filled and his store increased while they kept back the reward of his labor? Did they suppose that some miraculous interposition would occur? That ravens would be once more commissioned to feed the Prophets? Or that Manna would be rained down from heaven upon them. “Will a man rob God? Yet, ye have robbed me, saith the Lord, in tithes and offerings.”

*III. The third argument of the Apostle for the support of the Ministry is based upon the principles of reciprocity.*

“If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?”

The Apostle elsewhere delivers this injunction to Ministers and Churches, “Bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ,” and that, we may add, is the law of love. The mutual performance of good offices, constitutes the strongest cement of society, whether in the family circle, the church or the world. Reciprocal acts of kindness and generosity, whether between nations or individuals, is like oil upon the waters of strife; they soften and soothe the harsher and severer features of their characters.

But we should particularly note the antithesis in the passage. The worth of spiritual and carnal things is contrasted—and, yet is there the least proportion between any thing which the liberality of the church can impart to the Ministry, and that which it has been the happy instrument of imparting to the church? I have spoken in another part of this discourse of the value of the Ministry to the world in the temporal aspect of the question. Let us consider it in a higher and more important sense. Can man believe unto salvation without a preached gospel? Without the influence of the sacred Ministry exerted in some way or other, will he be brought to the knowledge of the truth? It is true, indeed, that “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But “how shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Preaching the word, is the great appointed agency of heaven, for the salvation of men. The sower must go forth bearing the precious seed. The golden harvest springs not up spontaneously. The idolater does not “cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold to the moles and



to the bats," before he has heard of the true God, whom he must worship in spirit and in truth. God has indissolubly united the salvation of the world and an evangelical christian Ministry. Who then, let me enquire is the greatest benefactor of the human race? The man who feeds the hungry and clothes the naked—who provides an asylum for the orphan and the widow, is loved and honored while he lives, and his memory is embalmed in the affections of the sons and daughters of affliction, when he dies. The names of a Howard, a Wilberforce, a Thornton, and a Dix, will be fragrant on the pages of history, while there remains a heart on earth to sympathize with the children of misfortune and oppression. Myriads will yet rise up and call them blessed. But it is the office of the Gospel Ministry to deliver from a more galling chain, than oppression ever forged—and from a more fearful derangement than any hallucinations found in the asylums of lunacy. Its high and noble vocation, is to pour light on the darkened soul, to instruct the ignorant and point out the way of eternal life—to unfold the value of the soul, and the infinite claims of Jehovah. "What can equal the mission of the Christian Ministry which man has received of the Lord Jesus Christ, "to testify the gospel of the grace of God." No angel ever came from heaven to earth on so mighty an errand. "I send thee," says the Lord Jesus, "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and the power of Satan to God."—Its aim is nothing less than to rescue guilty and depraved, yet immortal beings, from the lowest hell, and conduct them to the heaven of heavens. And when all the labor of other professors will be annihilated—when the finest paintings, the most durable monuments, the pyramids of Egypt—when the immortal works of philosophers, legislators, historians, and poets shall be consumed; and the earth and all that is therein shall be burned up; the effects of their tears and studies and visiting and praying and preaching shall remain. When every relation now existing is destroyed, and the race of men shall never again blend, as masters and servants, as princes and subjects, as parents and children, as husbands and wives, the relation existing between Ministers and people, will be undissolved. Is it a great thing then, if while journeying through life, they should reap a little of those good things which the providence of God has bestowed on those to whom they bring the words of eternal life?

Permit me now to direct your meditations to another aspect of this subject. We are often called to mourn over those alienations which spring up in our churches between Pastors



and their people. Nine times out of ten, they arise out of unfaithfulness on the part of one or the other. And remember that Ministers are not always inexcusable. Imprudence, indolence, and extravagance, give offence, and produce estrangement, and lay the ground work of separation. And oft times very small matters become the occasion of dissolving the pastoral relation. But I would ask every candid, reflecting man, if these dissensions, alienations and heart-burnings so frequently ending in the sundering of the ties that unite them as Pastor and people, do not in a very large number of instances originate from the neglect of churches to fulfil their stipulated engagements to their Pastors? They promise and never pay; or with very great tardiness and manifest reluctance they yield up once in a year or two a few dollars, as if it were the vital fluid of life. And with such a sorrowful face, and so ill a grace, is the diminutive stipend paid, that a sensitive and conscientious Minister hardly dare receive such contributions, lest he might be found guilty of receiving the price of blood. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. Year after year the Minister's debts increase, and the defalcations of his congregation increase. They are hundreds, it may be thousands in arrears, and he is perhaps as much in arrears to his creditors.\* His reputation for honesty suffers a sad blight, it may be a total paralysis. He is stigmatized for want of punctuality. He and his family are compelled to eat bread, and wear raiment for which they have not paid. His people are scandalized—they are chagrined and mortified at the failure of their Minister to meet his engagements. They meet him with coldness. They speak to and of him with unkindness. They do not enquire of his wants, nor visit him that they may learn his estate. They stand aloof, and treat him as a stranger, and a foreigner.—Indeed we have thought they fear to meet him, or enter his dwelling, because we doubt not that lingering remains of conscience inflict upon their souls most agonizing goadings. How such congregations can sit in the house of God, and

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\*We have known churches to *perish out* their Minister and cause him to seek a dissolution of the pastoral relation, to escape absolute want and starvation, because there happened to be in their neighborhood another having means of living independent of a salary, with a view of procuring his services for absolutely nothing. We have known others to call and settle a Minister, who was able to live upon property which he had inherited; and then absolutely refuse to pay what they had promised, and the only excuse offered, was, "Oh he don't want it; he is rich." Are such churches honorable? Are they honest? It is a species of dereliction little short of swindling.



look upon the face of a Minister whose confidence has been thus abused and betrayed; how they can receive from his hands the sacramental bread and wine, is to my mind one of the inexplicabilities of depravity.

A Minister, is a man—a frail worm of dust. When trodden down, he will, he must complain. Then comes the sad, the chilling repulse, "If you are dissatisfied, sir, we have come to the conclusion, that we will dispense with your services." It is perfectly astounding to witness what adroitness is employed by some men in shuffling off obligations which under more favorable and exciting circumstances, they had voluntarily assumed. But I must dismiss this painful topic.

It would be a pleasing task to contemplate the other side of the picture. In a church where each party is diligent to discharge their respective duties, peace and concord dwell. Such a people will be even, "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing; even life forevermore." Ps. 133. 3.

*IV. The fourth argument of the Apostle is of a personal nature, based upon that support which they had given others, who had ministered in the Corinthian Church.*

"If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?"

Ministers should be valued and provided for according to their worth. None had given to the Corinthians greater evidence of the Apostolical mission than Paul. He had been the instrument of gathering and building up the church of Christ at Corinth. No one had labored so much for their good, or had done such service among them. None had therefore so just a claim upon them for support. Others, (and perhaps false teachers, who had more regard for the fleece than the flock) had preached among them, and they had rewarded them liberally. It is most apparent and reasonable, that those who have been the means of edifying and instructing us, should be allowed a maintenance. If any had claims upon them, surely the Apostle had. He was their spiritual father and shepherd. "Nevertheless," he says, "we have not used this power but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ." To avoid the cavils of malicious, and ill disposed persons, he chose rather to suffer the fatigues of labor, and inconveniences of frequent necessities, "hunger and thirst; cold and nakedness." But it is worthy of notice, that though the Apostle oft times wrought at his own occupation to secure the means of living for himself and those with him, and was



oft times in great straits as he prosecuted his mission of love, yet he did not at all times refuse to receive aid of the churches. To the generous church of Phillippi he thus gratefully acknowledges his obligations, "Ye have done well, that ye did communicate with my afflictions; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessities." But among the churches of Macedonia he utterly refused any compensation; and he specially reminds the Elders of Ephesus in his final interview with them at Miletus, that, "these hands as ye yourselves know have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." And doubtless the Apostle perceived a good and sufficient reason (not necessary for us exactly to know,) which determined him to decline accepting any subsistence from the people of Corinth while he resided among them. Although he did so for prudential reasons, yet he assures them that it was not because he was not entitled to it, "for if others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?" It was ever his injunction, "to do good, and communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifice God is well pleased."

*V. The Apostle's fifth and last argument is based upon the usages of all Nations, to sustain the Ministers of religion.*

"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple, and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar."

Without doubt the Apostle here principally refers to the nature and amount of that support assigned to the Priests and the Levites according to the law of Moses. Nevertheless, the same is true of every organized form of religion, that provision is made in some way for the sustentation of him who ministers its rites and ceremonies whether he be a Mahomedan Mufti, a Hindoo Bramin, or a Chinese Chiam.

Under the Jewish economy, the subsistence of the Priesthood was derived from various sources, and it will be impossible to ascertain the exact amount of their stipend. Yet as an illustration of the Apostle's meaning, it will be proper to glance at the sources of revenue.

In the first place: To the Priesthood, thirteen cities were assigned in the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, that they might be near the temple at Jerusalem. These might properly have been denominated the parsonages, or according to modern language, the Manses and Glebes of the Clergy. The quantity of land attached to these cities, was, severally, according



to an accurate writer\* about 305 English acres, and altogether to the thirteen cities about 4000 acres. Such was their legal appointment for gardens, vineyards and pasturage.

And it may not be inappropriate in this connection to remark, that our churches would find it greatly to their interest, if some provisions of a similar kind were made by them for their Ministers. The most profitable investment ever made by a people, would be to provide a home for their Pastor. It would more certainly secure to them the services of a minister than any other method that could be devised. A comfortable parsonage, especially in country churches, and lands adapted to tillage, would lessen, perhaps, by one half the annual contributions necessary to his support. With such a home for a Minister and his family, I venture the assertion that no church would long remain destitute of the ordinances of religion. But the details of such a plan cannot now be given.

I proceed to observe that the stipends of the Jewish Clergy, besides the cities assigned them, were derived from the following sources :

1. The portion of the sacrifices which were reserved from the altar, namely, the whole of the meat offering except the handful which was burned; the skins of all the burnt offerings offered by individuals; the right shoulders which were heaved; the breasts which were waved, and the sodden shoulder of the Nazarite's peace offering. Now it should be remembered that the Jewish ritual abounded in sacrifices—morning and evening—monthly and annual sacrifices; and what then must have been the emoluments of those who waited at the altar?

2. The second stipend or source of revenue, arose from the first fruits of the oil, wine, wheat, barley and every kind of crop. This portion was fixed by the Rabbins at not more than the fortieth, nor less than the sixtieth of the whole crop. The man who gave the fortieth, as being the most liberal, his gift was termed "the oblation of a good eye;" the bestowment of a fiftieth part was called "the oblation of a middle eye," but the gift of the sixtieth, as being the most stinted and penurious, was denominated "the oblation of an evil eye." And let it be remembered too, that the land of Judea was at this period a very rich and productive country; a land flowing with milk and honey, abounding in oil, wine and grains. We may perceive at a glance that the revenue derived from this source must have been immense.

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\*Brown's Jewish Antiq.



3. The third item of revenue consisted of every thing devoted to the Lord, as freewill or thanksgiving offerings, for singular mercies and providential deliverances. This, it is true, depended upon the pious and grateful emotions of the people, but throughout the nation must have been considerable every year.

4. The fourth item of stipend consisted of the firstlings of the cattle. These were devoted to the Lord, as a commemoration of the wonders wrought by his hand, when the cattle of the Hebrews had been preserved, and those of the Egyptians had been destroyed. The firstlings could not be redeemed with money, but were delivered in kind; the blood and the fat were offered to Jehovah, but the carcasses were the Priest's. This must also have been a fruitful source of support.

5. The fifth item, consisted in the first fleece of all the sheep, which in a pastoral country must have been of great value.

6. The sixth source of income, arose from the redemption of the first born of man. This was ordained on account of the preservation of the first born of the Israelites, when those of the Egyptians were destroyed by the destroying angel. Every male child that arrived at one month old, must be redeemed at the value of five shekels or about three dollars of our money. As to the number of the first born males in all the tribes we learn from the third chapter of Numbers, that at this early period of the nation, they amounted, in one generation to 22,273, or the sum total of the redemption money was about \$66,719.

7. A seventh item of Jewish stipend, was the tenth of the tithes, which the Levites collected as their right through all the tribes. What the tithes of all Israel might be, we cannot know; but in a district of country 200 miles long, and more than 100 broad, including both sides of the Jordan, they could not be a mere trifle.

8. An eighth item, was the fifth part that was added to any estimation of trespass in the things of the Lord.

9. The ninth and last source of income was derived from the fruits of all trees. The fruits of trees during the first three years after they began to produce, were pronounced unclean. The fruit of the fourth year, was devoted to the Lord and was consequently the property of the Priesthood.

I need not dwell on the provision made for the sustentation of the Levites, another and more numerous class of Jewish Ministers, including the whole tribe of Levi, with the



exception of Aaron's family, to which the Priesthood was confined.

To them were assigned thirty-five out of the forty-eight cities set apart for the whole tribe of Levi. To these cities were attached between 10,000 and 11,000 acres of glebe lands for gardens, vineyards and pasturage. Nine tenths of all the titheable productions of the other eleven tribes were theirs. The fruits of trees and grains and "the tithe of the herd and the flock, even of whatever passed under the rod." Thus the aggregate revenues of those who ministered at the altar of the Jewish nation will be seen at a glance to have been ample, abundantly to supply every want.

But some may say, this state of things existed under an economy very different from the present; one much more burdensome, and by no means applicable to our day. Be not too hasty, my friends, in making your objection. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. The Apostle after referring to the fact, that they who minister about holy things and they who wait at the altar are by the law of God, partakers with the altar, closes with this declaration: "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel;" that is the Lord Jesus Christ, hath himself expressly enacted it—it is the ordinance—the solemn law of heaven, that they who preach the gospel, should live by the gospel—should have such reward or compensation from men, as should meet their necessities and comfort on earth. The support of the Ministry, is then claimed of divine right, and he who refuses or neglects to do so is guilty of the infraction of a law of God, and is in actual and open rebellion against the government of heaven.—The maintenance of the Ministry is not a charity. Ministers are not pensioners of the church; mere mendicants subsisting on alms, although we have reason to believe that many regard them in this light. Is the reward of the physician who heals your diseases, a charity? Is the fee of the attorney who defends your reputation or estate from the grasp of the destroyer, a charity? Is the hire of the mechanic who constructs your houses or builds your machinery, a charity? Is the reward of the laborer, who ploughs your fields or reaps your harvests, a charity? Is the compensation of the teacher who instructs your children, a charity? No; justice, natural and divine, proclaim these debts sacredly due. So the Bible declares it to be the ordination of heaven, and according to the rules of eternal rectitude, that the teacher of heavenly truth shall receive his due reward. The Jewish ministry was thus sustained under the theocracy by the



express command of God, and it is decreed with equal solemnity that under the Christian dispensation the ministry shall also be sustained.

I have now reviewed some of the teachings of the Bible on this important topic. I have only a few additional remarks to offer, before I close.

My brethren, the honor of our holy religion is closely allied with the support of its authorized teachers. Although infidelity scoffs at the gospel Ministry and imputes to it all the black and fiendish arts and purposes of a corrupt Priesthood—charging upon it the spirit of self-aggrandizement, covetousness, and worldliness; yet infidelity is as ready to asperse religion itself as its teachers, when its vital energies are so feeble in its professors and advocates, as to permit them to neglect its due support. I once heard one of this class observe with a sneer of contempt, when the neglect of a certain large and wealthy church to support its Pastor was the subject of remark, "It must be a poor religion that won't support itself; even the religion of heathens does better."

Our estimation of any thing is generally measured, by the sacrifices we are willing to make to sustain and promote it. Look at the untiring devotion of the self-sacrificing politician. To him no service is too onerous—no pecuniary expenditure too great—no work too degrading, low and filthy, that he may accomplish his ends and sustain his party.—Tongue and hands and purse, yea, soul and body are brought into requisition; friendship, favor and reputation are staked and lost, that he may secure the triumph of his cherished opinions. Oh! that a spirit, so unflinching, so wakeful, so undying, might pervade the hearts of God's professed people, in sustaining a cause infinitely more important in all its bearings and consequences.

The support of the Ministry has an important bearing upon the future increase of the Ministry. The cry comes up from every part of the land, "A dearth of candidates for the Ministry." From the vast territories of heathenism, the cry comes "Send us help;" and from the lands enshrouded in Papal darkness, the cry comes over "Let us have more light;" and from the Atlantic States, and the Great Valley States, and the young and giant States on the Pacific shores the cry is still "Give us more Gospel Ministers." and as these appeals reach our ears, we pause and ask "Who will go?" Who says, "Here am I, send me, send me far hence to the Gentiles—send me to the millions of ignorant, superstitious, trodden down Romanists of Europe, send me to the



Western wilds, or wherever there is work to do in the great vineyard?" Few, very few heed the call. Why is it thus? Has the converting grace of God been stayed? Have the windows of heaven been closed so that no heavenly, refreshing shower has descended on any part of Zion? No, there are hundreds and thousands of pious young men in the churches. Other professions are crowded, and in those professions we find a host of pious young men, the sons of the church. Many of them have entertained thoughts of entering the Ministry; they have felt that it would be a privilege to preach Christ; yet well knowing the fact, that a large portion of those who have entered the field, have been poorly requited, and instead of comfort and encouragement, have met with little else than buffetings and trials, they turn away from it, and engage in some other pursuit. Such quiet the appeals of conscience by hoping that they may be useful in some more private relation to the church. That such cases do occur, we do know. Does any one say, that men influenced by such motives are not worthy of the office? But such should "learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice," saith the Lord. God never required any man to serve him for a thing of nought. To engage in the prosecution of a work, which promises no certain means of competency, requires more courage than falls to the lot of most men; yes, to do so, demands a high degree of enthusiasm, or a daring spirit of recklessness. The advancing state of society, and the tide of improvement throughout our country, throws wide open to the young, so many lucrative employments, so many inviting fields of enterprise, that the wonder is, that any make preparation for the service of God in his church. The sons of the wealthy with rare exceptions never entertain the thought of becoming Ministers. The large proportion of the Ministry of our church, has arisen from among the poorer classes, such as were unable to educate themselves, and have therefore been dependent on the beneficent. The day may come when even the present paucity of candidates, shall be greatly diminished, nay, I verily believe it is now at hand.

But, brethren, I must close. By not sustaining the Ministry, it is weakened; you burden it with worldly care and anxiety—harassed in mind and compelled to take anxious thought for to-morrow, their studies and sermons, their pulpits and prayers, lose strength and unction, and unless there be more care taken in the support of the Ministry, it will become in a good degree secularized, the strength of our pulpits weakened, and its influence for good greatly diminished,



